How to Claim the Ripple Effect

Want to boost your impact? Start thinking bigger and bolder about your work.

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What results do you get?

If you're an entrepreneur, it's a question you're used to being asked. And if, like many entrepreneurs, your answer focuses only on the direct results you achieve for your clients, you are missing out on claiming, celebrating and leveraging the full extent of your impact.

Understanding the entrepreneurial ripple effect

At the heart of every entrepreneurial business is a dream, a set of values and a mission. It's your big Why for doing what you do, the main driver that fuels you through the ups and downs of entrepreneurial life. And something powerful happens when you align all of your business actions, decisions and offers with this passion.

It starts with making a difference in the lives of your clients, but it doesn't end there. For entrepreneurs centered in their Why, this is where the ripple effect comes into play and extends their impact far beyond individual clients.

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Identifying your full impact

What drives me is believing that I've illuminated the lights of not only the entrepreneurs I've worked with directly, but all the people who benefit from their work. Kristine Hanson, an affordable-housing consultant, helps her clients complete their low-income housing projects on time and on budget. While this in itself is significant, in working with Hanson we quickly identified a much fuller impact.

Here's how her ripple effect plays out:

- **Direct effect for clients:** Organizations complete low-income housing projects.
- **Direct effect for those served by her clients:** Families are able to afford a safe place to call home.
- **Indirect effect for families:** With affordable rent, fewer families may have to choose between buying food or accessing healthcare. This could result in better overall health for the family and greater success in school for children.
- **Wide reaching community effect:** Improved health and school performance may lead to less of a strain on community resources.
- **Overall societal effect:** Ultimately, Hanson's work can help level the playing field of opportunity, making the dream of and right to create a good life for our families more accessible to a greater number of people.

Mapping your ripple effect

- **Start with your clients:** Make a list of all of the direct results you deliver and help your clients achieve. (In the example above, Hanson's clients

are organizations that create low-income housing.)

- **Go to the next level of impact:** How does achieving those results affect their lives? How does it affect the lives of their families, co-workers, friends and others with whom they interact? Brainstorm all of the possibilities, then talk to your clients and do customer research to discover types and levels of impact you might not have even imagined. (For Hanson, the next level of impact extends to the families who can benefit in multiple ways from quality low-income housing.)
- **Take it a step further to the wider community:** Now look at the impact on the level of the community. Start with the local community, but don't stop there. Is there an impact on the societal level? Is there an impact culturally or globally? (Hanson's work can benefit the community by reducing the number of families in need of assistance, and may impact society at large by creating greater access to opportunity for all to thrive.)

When speaker, coach and empowerment expert Susan Eckstein used this framework to map out her ripple effect, she gained clarity on the full extent of the difference she is able to make. Starting with her clients, Eckstein helps women live their lives unapologetically on their own terms, overcoming societal expectations about what it means to be a woman and a mother.

Going to the next level, Eckstein's coaching may also create a ripple effect from her direct clients to their families and home life, where less stress can lead to kids feeling happier and performing better in school. Taking it a step further to the wider community, Eckstein's work could help to change the way we define roles for women in our society.

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Leveraging your impact

Understanding your full impact will help you create a profitable business and a far-reaching legacy. All it takes is connection to your purpose, digging deeper into the ripple effect of your work and making your messaging less about your products and services and more about the difference you want to make.

When you do this, you start to own the fact that you are more than a product or service provider. You are a thought leader driving a potentially global shift. The world needs the leadership you are uniquely positioned to provide, and it starts with thinking bigger and bolder about the ripple effect of your work.

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